



**Michigan Corrections Organization**  
421 W. Kalamazoo St.  
Lansing, MI 48933  
(517) 485-3310  
mco-seiu.org

**Michigan Department of Corrections**  
206 E. Michigan Ave.  
Lansing, MI 48909  
(517) 335-1426  
michigan.gov/corrections



## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 25, 2016

**CONTACT: MCO Communications Director Anita Lloyd**

(517)485-3310 [anita@mco-seiu.org](mailto:anita@mco-seiu.org)

**MDOC Public Information Officer Chris Gautz**

(517)241-0363 [gautzc@michigan.gov](mailto:gautzc@michigan.gov)

**Desert Waters Correctional Outreach Executive Director Caterina Spinaris**

(719) 784-4727 [cgspinaris@gmail.com](mailto:cgspinaris@gmail.com)

### **Study: PTSD, depression common among Michigan corrections and forensic officers**

*Taxing jobs in secure facilities lead to overwhelming stress, but the officers' union and the employer are partnering to find solutions.*

Michigan corrections officers and forensic security assistants are exposed to high levels of violence, injury, and death events in their workplaces. They also grapple with high levels of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression symptoms, and as their exposure to traumatic events increases, staff's mental health decreases. Additionally, those who have more than 10 years of experience on the job, and those who work in high-security prisons, are even more likely to suffer from these conditions.

These findings were revealed in an academic research study conducted by [Desert Waters Correctional Outreach](#), a non-profit corporation which specializes in the health and well-being of corrections professionals. The study, [Prevalence of Trauma-related Health Conditions in Correctional Officers: A Profile of Michigan Corrections Organization members](#), is based on a staff wellness assessment taken by about 1,000 employees represented by Michigan Corrections Organization.

"The study's findings reinforce a growing perspective among researchers that corrections officers suffer health detriments due to high stress and potentially traumatic occupational experiences comparable to those more widely known to occur for police officers, firefighters, and combat military personnel," said Caterina Spinaris, Executive Director at Desert Waters.

Now, [Michigan Corrections Organization](#) and the [Michigan Department of Corrections](#) are joining forces with Desert Waters on a more extensive study of addressing corrections officer stress due to traumatic exposure on the job. This partnership, which is contingent on grant funding, will include further research to help officers cope with work-related stressors.

"Our employees are the greatest asset we have in the department of corrections and their mental health and well-being are of the utmost importance. We are pleased to join MCO and Desert Waters in this further study," MDOC Director Heidi Washington said. "Our hope is this scientific study will serve as a guide that will lead us to the most effective training and best practices possible to help our officers better handle the stresses they face at work and that we know they carry with them once they leave the prison walls."

"MCO members have seen the effects of stress first hand, and the toll it takes on our health and families," said Cary Johnson, MCO Executive Board member and point-person on the union's PTSD awareness work. "Now, we have scientific data that helps us understand what we're experiencing and empowers us to bring it out of the shadows."

"We've established that suffering from PTSD and depression symptoms is very real for our members," MCO President Tom Tylutki said. "I'm pleased that MCO, MDOC, and Desert Waters aren't just resting on that fact. We're quickly

moving forward to hopefully help staff recognize symptoms and take action that could possibly save lives. That's our responsibility to our members and their families."

###

Michigan Corrections Organization/SEIU represents more than 6,500 corrections officers working at state prisons and forensic security assistants at the Center for Forensic Psychiatry.